THE WORLD.

NUMBER LXXXVIII.

By *ADAM FITZ-ADAM.*

To be continued every THURSDAY.

THURSDAY, *September* the 5th, 1754.

To Mr. FITZ-ADAM.

SIR,

FROM a full conviction that your ears are always open to the afflicted, I preſume to ſend you the ſtory of my diſtreſs, which is left to your diſcretion whether or no it be deſerving of public commiſeration. Previous, however, to what relates immediately to myſelf, be ſo kind as to indulge an elderly man, whoſe infirmity it is to be talkative, and who delights in a long train of animadverſions upon every intereſting occurrence.

AT the creation of your WORLD your modeſty ſuggeſted that the advantages accruing from it might enable you in due time to keep a one-horſe chair, and that as ſoon as you were in poſſeſſion of this vehicle, you would invite the reader to a ſeat in it, and occaſionally make the tour of the adjacent villages. But whether you are enabled to ſet up this equipage or not, I would adviſe you,

you, at this ſeaſon of the year, to withdraw your laudable purpoſe of reforming vice triumphant in town, and to let your endeavours be directed to confirm virtue militant in the country. Drinking, gaming, atheiſm, and the minor vices, which from time immemorial have more or leſs ſwarmed in our capital, have been combated by the moſt eminent divines, moraliſts and poets, and all to no purpoſe. For my own part, I cannot help looking upon almoſt every ſpecies of diſſoluteneſs as a kind of plague; and if I was worthy of adviſing the legiſlature, I ſhould propoſe that a line of circumvallation might be made at the diſtance of five miles all round the town, and a guard appointed to prohibit all perſons, betraying the leaſt ſymptom of any of theſe epidemical diſeaſes, from paſſing the line. Provided always, that in caſe a radical cure ſhall be effected on a patient or patients, he, ſhe, or they, on a proper certificate declaring them free from all infection, may be privileged to quit thoſe noiſome quarters, and retire into the country. I can think of no other method by which the miſerable objects that range under the ſeveral denominations of gameſters, ſwearers, liars, drunkards, coxcombs, faſhion-mongers, &c. in either ſex, may be excluded all communion with thoſe who are untainted.

A CONSIDERATE perſon cannot paſs a coxcomb in his walks, without being ſenſibly hurt at the reflection that ſuch a calamity is incident to human nature. Theſe deplorable creatures are incapacitated from concealing their complaint: a primary ſymptom is a total ſuppreſſion of every reaſonable thought; after which, there can be no wonder, if, when they are become fools, they put on the habit of their order, and continue to fatigue the invention of their tradeſmen, with a view to beguile the tedioufneſs of time.

WHAT,

WHAT, Mr. Fitz-Adam, ſhall we ſay to thoſe perſons, who will ſubject themſelves to infection by a communication with ſuch wretches? I could as ſoon pay a viſit to a man born deaf and dumb, for the ſake of converſation, as deceive myſelf with the idea of improvement with one of theſe coxcombs. The notoriety of the ſymptoms attending this diſeaſe, makes it needleſs to recite them all; a vaſt pomp of dreſs, an habitual contraction of the muſcles to a grin, with a continual incoherent kind of prattle, are ſo many characteriſtics of their diſtemper. And, I fear, the validity of our plea would be rejected, ſhould we urge that we fell inadvertently into their company; ſince they generally carry their heads, like thoſe of poſts on a foot-path, ſufficiently whitened, to deter even the moſt heedleſs from ſtumbling on them in the dark.

AMONG the ſeveral peſtilences which conſtitute the general plague, no one is of equal fatality with that of FASHION. Thoſe who are ſeized with this phrenſy, as they are the moſt numerous, ſo are they the moſt extravagant in their actions. The females diſcover their being tainted, by every geſticulation of a COUSIN BETTY. They wear no cap, and only ſubſtitute in it's room a variety of trumpery ribbands, tied up with no other propriety than the preſent fit ſhall happen to direct. Let your eye travel over the whole perſon, and by the diſpoſition of the dreſs, you will no longer heſitate if the imagination is diſturbed. By what means, Mr. Fitz-Adam, except by the effects, ſhall we determine the *mens ſana*? And what judgment ought we to paſs upon thoſe crowds of females, who are every day tottering along the public walks upon peg-heels? Nothing, ſurely, can be more repugnant to common ſenſe, than this contrivance in the ladies to weaken their ſupport, who had before too

great

great an aptitude to fall. If there can be any reaſon aſſigned for ſo ſtrange a conduct, it muſt be this, that they thought it neceſſary to diminiſh the baſe, after they had lightened the capital.

IT would be a downright arraignment of your ſagacity to imagine that the malignant conſequences annexed to this diſtemper are unnoticed by you. An object whoſe entire maſs of blood is corrupted by FASHION, becomes not unworthy the cognizance of the higher powers, as the moſt prejudicial Being to a civil ſociety. In order to think as I do, you need only to conſider what are the evils conſequential to FASHION. Are they not thoſe of folly, pride, extravagance, gaming, and even diſhoneſty? Perſons afflicted with this malady, are apt to imagine themſelves under no obligation to pay their juſt debts; while thoſe contracted at a gaming-table are to be diſcharged with all the punctuality of honeſty.

THESE reflections, Mr. Fitz-Adam, are the reſult of a heart-felt concern for the good of my country. The proſperous growth of every kind of iniquity cannot fail, in the end, of endangering her political health. One ſhould be apt to believe that our own ſoil was not pregnant enough with vice, while we are dayly adopting every exotic folly. Our natural enemy, even antecedent to conqueſt, is impoſing upon us, not only her language, but her manners and her dreſs. A ſuperficial view of the hiſtory of old Rome will preſent us with every ſimilar circumſtance of corruption——God forbid a ſimilar fate ſhould overtake us!

I HAVE hitherto ſuppreſſed an inclination to trouble you with my diſapprobation of the times; and nothing leſs than an open violation of all the laws of decency, good ſenſe, and duty, in my own family, could have prompted

prompted me to enlarge the liſt of your correſpondents. I am now, ſir, at my paternal eſtate, where I conſtantly reſide, unleſs ſome unavoidable occurrence breaks in upon my retirement, and calls me to town. In the younger part of my days, by virtue of public employments, I was admitted to a pretty large commerce with mankind; but on my father's deceaſe ſatiated with the pleaſures of high life, I withdrew in my forty firſt year to the place I now write from. I am conſcious of no very material imprudence that I have been guilty of, except my marriage, which has ſhaded my viſionary proſpect of happineſs with the heavieſt diſquietude. Two daughters only are the iſſue of this marriage; who, thanks to the tuition of their mother, are not wanting in any ſingle accompliſhment of modiſh education. They ſpeak French before they underſtand Engliſh, and play at cards for pounds, without knowing the value of a ſhilling; and, in a word, by a patrician diſreliſh of oeconomy, ſpeak themſelves the inconteſted children of ſir Pope Pedigree's daughter. I forbear to mention the manner in which (with their mother's connivance) they affect to expoſe the obſcurity of my family; becauſe I muſt acknowledge it to have been deſtitute of the honour of a dignified ſpendthrift, or an illuſtrious ſuicide.

HAVING lived ſo long a voluntary exile from the beau mond, my maxims are exploded as quite obſolete. My wife and daughters are perpetually aſſuring me that I act in no reſpect like any of my polite neighbours: I will not diſpute that they have ſome colour of truth for this aſſertion; for you muſt be ſenſible, Mr. Fitz-Adam, that it is no eaſy matter for a man in his grand climacteric to diveſt himſelf of old accuſtomed prejudices; and though I profeſs all imaginable deference to my great neighbours, they